

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A method for managing Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, comprising:
allocating a plurality of local IP address pools, each of said local IP address pools associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests requiring an IP address, said network edge device having a local memory, said local memory including a local IP address pool database;
requesting IP address usage data from one or more of said network edge devices;
receiving said requested IP address usage data;
determining whether one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools should be reallocated based upon at least said requested IP address usage data;
reallocating one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools based upon said determining; and
updating one or more of said local IP address pool databases and a global IP pool database based upon said reallocating, said global IP address pool database including the information maintained in each said local IP address pool.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein
said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum
number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;
said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said high watermark of a
local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit; and
said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be
reallocated to give more IP addresses to the network element associated
with said high watermark when said high watermark exceeds said high
watermark limit.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein
each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates
the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;
said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said low watermark of
said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and
said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be
reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated
with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low
watermark limit.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein said reallocating further comprises:

allocating an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient; allocating an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and reallocating one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from a local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.
6. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6 wherein said network operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).

8. (Original) The method of claim 7 wherein
said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and
said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.

9. (Withdrawn) A method for managing Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, comprising:

allocating a plurality of local IP address pools, each of said local IP address pools associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests requiring an IP address, said network edge device having a local memory, said local memory including a local IP address pool database;

receiving a communication from said network edge device, said communication including an IP address usage summary;

determining whether one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools should be adjusted based upon said IP address usage summary; and

adjusting one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools based upon said determining.

10. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 9 wherein:

said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;

 said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said high watermark of a local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit; and

 said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to give more IP addresses to the network element associated with said high watermark when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit.

11. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said low watermark of a said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and

 said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

12. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 11 wherein said reallocating further comprises:

allocating an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient;

allocating an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and

reallocating one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from a local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

13. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 9 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

14. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 11 wherein said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

15. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 14 wherein said network operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).
16. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 15 wherein said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.
17. (Withdrawn) A method for managing Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, comprising:
 - receiving a communication;
 - allocating an available IP address from said local IP address pool if said communication includes a connection request, said local IP address pool associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests;
 - determining whether said local IP address pool should be adjusted;
 - sending a alarm message to an IP pool manager when said IP address pool should be adjusted; and
 - storing an IP address allocation when said communication includes an IP address allocation.
18. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17 wherein

said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and

 said determining further comprises:

 ascertaining whether said high watermark of a local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit; and

 indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to give more IP addresses to said network edge device when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit.

19. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein

 each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;

 and

 said determining further comprises:

 ascertaining whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and

 said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from said network edge device when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

20. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 19 wherein said reallocating further comprises:

allocating an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient;

allocating an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and

reallocating one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from said local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

21. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and said determining further comprises: ascertaining whether said low watermark of said local address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

22. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 19 wherein

said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and
 said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

23. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said network operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).

24. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 23 wherein
 said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and
 said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.

25. (Original) A program storage device readable by a machine, embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method to manage Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, the method comprising:
 allocating a plurality of local IP address pools, each of said local IP address pools associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests requiring an IP address, said network edge device having a local memory, said local memory including a local IP address pool database;
 requesting IP address usage data from one or more of said network edge devices;
 receiving said requested IP address usage data;
 determining whether one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools should be reallocated based upon at least said requested IP address usage data;

reallocating one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools based upon
said determining; and
updating one or more of said local IP address pool databases and a global IP pool
database based upon said reallocating, said global IP address pool
database including the information maintained in each said local IP
address pool.

26. (Original) The program storage device of claim 25 wherein
said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum
number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;
said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said high watermark of a
local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit; and
said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be
reallocated to give more IP addresses to the network element associated
with said high watermark when said high watermark exceeds said high
watermark limit.

27. (Original) The program storage device of claim 26 wherein
each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates
the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;
said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said low watermark of
said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and

said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

28. (Original) The program storage device of claim 27 wherein said reallocating further comprises:

 allocating an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient;

 allocating an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and

 reallocating one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from a local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

29. (Original) The program storage device of claim 25 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and

said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

30. (Original) The program storage device of claim 27 wherein said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

31. (Original) The program storage device of claim 30 wherein said network operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).

32. (Original) The program storage device of claim 31 wherein said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.

33. (Withdrawn) A program storage device readable by a machine, embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method to manage Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, the method comprising:
 allocating a plurality of local IP address pools, each of said local IP address pools associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests requiring an IP address, said network edge device

having a local memory, said local memory including a local IP address pool database;

receiving a communication from said network edge device, said communication including an IP address usage summary;

determining whether one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools should be adjusted based upon said IP address usage summary; and

adjusting one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools based upon said determining.

34. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 33 wherein:
said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;
said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said high watermark of a local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit; and
said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to give more IP addresses to the network element associated with said high watermark when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit.

35. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 34 wherein
each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;

said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said low watermark of a
 said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and
 said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be
 reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated
 with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low
 watermark limit.

36. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 35 wherein said reallocating
 further comprises:
 allocating an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools
 when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when
 the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient;
 allocating an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high
 watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of
 unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and
 reallocating one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from a local IP
 address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark
 limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

37. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 33 wherein
 each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates
 the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;

said determining further comprises ascertaining whether said low watermark of
 said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and
 said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be
 reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated
 with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said
 low watermark limit.

38. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 35 wherein
 said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and
 said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

39. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 38 wherein said network
 operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).

40. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 39 wherein
 said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and
 said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.

41. (Withdrawn) A program storage device readable by a machine, embodying a
 program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method to
 manage Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, the
 method comprising:
 receiving a communication;

allocating an available IP address from said local IP address pool if said communication includes a connection request, said local IP address pool associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests;

determining whether said local IP address pool should be adjusted;

sending a alarm message to an IP pool manager when said IP address pool should be adjusted; and

storing an IP address allocation when said communication includes an IP address allocation.

42. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 41 wherein said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and said determining further comprises:

ascertaining whether said high watermark of a local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit; and

indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to give more IP addresses to said network edge device when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit.

43. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 42 wherein

each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and

said determining further comprises:

ascertaining whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and

said method further comprises indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from said network edge device when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

44. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 43 wherein said reallocating further comprises:
 - allocating an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient;
 - allocating an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and
 - reallocating one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from said local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

45. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 41 wherein
each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates
the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;
and
said determining further comprises:
ascertaining whether said low watermark of said local address pool exceeds a low
watermark limit; and
indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP
addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark
when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

46. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 43 wherein
said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and
said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

47. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 46 wherein said network
operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).

48. (Withdrawn) The program storage device of claim 47 wherein
said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and
said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.

49. (Original) An apparatus for managing Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, the apparatus comprising:
means for allocating a plurality of local IP address pools, each of said local IP address pools associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests requiring an IP address, said network edge device having a local memory, said local memory including a local IP address pool database;
means for requesting IP address usage data from one or more of said network edge devices;
means for receiving said requested IP address usage data;
means for determining whether one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools should be reallocated based upon at least said requested IP address usage data;
means for reallocating one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools based upon said determining; and
means for updating one or more of said local IP address pool databases and a global IP pool database based upon said reallocating, said global IP address pool database including the information maintained in each said local IP address pool.

50. (Original) The apparatus of claim 49 wherein
said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;

said means for determining further comprises means for ascertaining whether said high watermark of a local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit; and

said apparatus further comprises means for indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to give more IP addresses to the network element associated with said high watermark when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit.

51. (Original) The apparatus of claim 50 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; said means for determining further comprises means for ascertaining whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and said apparatus further comprises means for indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

52. (Original) The apparatus of claim 51 wherein said reallocating further comprises: means for allocating an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient;

means for allocating an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and

means for reallocating one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from a local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

53. (Original) The apparatus of claim 49 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; said means for determining further comprises ascertaining whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and said apparatus further comprises means for indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

54. (Original) The apparatus of claim 51 wherein said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

55. (Original) The apparatus of claim 54 wherein said network operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).

56. (Original) The apparatus of claim 55 wherein said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.

57. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for managing Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, the apparatus comprising:
means for allocating a plurality of local IP address pools, each of said local IP address pools associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests requiring an IP address, said network edge device having a local memory, said local memory including a local IP address pool database;
means for receiving a communication from said network edge device, said communication including an IP address usage summary;
means for determining whether one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools should be adjusted based upon said IP address usage summary; and
means for adjusting one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools based upon said determining.

58. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 57 wherein:

said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;
 said means for determining further comprises means for ascertaining whether said high watermark of a local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit;
 and
 said apparatus further comprises means for indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to give more IP addresses to the network element associated with said high watermark when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit.

59. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; said means for determining further comprises means for ascertaining whether said low watermark of a said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and said apparatus further comprises means for indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.
60. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 11 wherein said reallocating further comprises:

means for allocating an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient; means for allocating an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and means for reallocating one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from a local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

61. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 57 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; said means for determining further comprises means for ascertaining whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and said apparatus further comprises means for indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

62. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 59 wherein said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and

said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

63. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 62 wherein said network operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).

64. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 63 wherein
 said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and
 said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.

65. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for managing Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, the apparatus comprising:
 means for receiving a communication;
 means for allocating an available IP address from a local IP address pool if said communication includes a connection request, said local IP address pool associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests;
 means for determining whether said local IP address pool should be adjusted;
 means for sending a alarm message to a global IP pool manager when said IP address pool should be adjusted; and
 means for storing an IP address allocation when said communication includes an IP address allocation.

66. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 65 wherein

said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and

 said means for determining further comprises:

 means for ascertaining whether said high watermark of a local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit; and

 means for indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to give more IP addresses to said network edge device when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit.

67. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 66 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and

 said means for determining further comprises:

 means for ascertaining whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and

 said apparatus further comprises means for indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from said network edge device when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

68. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 67 wherein said reallocating further comprises:

means for allocating an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient;

means for allocating an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and

means for reallocating one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from said local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

69. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 65 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and said means for determining further comprises: means for ascertaining whether said low watermark of said local address pool exceeds a low watermark limit; and means for indicating one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

70. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 67 wherein

said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and
 said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

71. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 70 wherein said network operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).

72. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 71 wherein
 said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and
 said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.

73. (Original) An apparatus capable of managing Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, said apparatus comprising:
 a memory for storing a global IP address pool; and
 a global IP pool manager, comprising:
 an allocator capable of allocating a plurality of local IP address pools, each of said local IP address pools associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests requiring an IP address;
 a requestor capable of requesting IP address usage data from one or more of said network edge devices;
 a determiner capable of determining whether one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools should be reallocated based upon at least said requested IP address usage data;

a reallocator capable of reallocating one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools based upon said an indication from said determiner; and an updater capable of updating one or more of said local IP address pool databases and said global IP pool database based upon said reallocating.

74. (Original) The apparatus of claim 73 wherein said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and said determiner is further configured to ascertain whether said high watermark of a local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit and to indicate IP address pool should be reallocated to give more IP addresses to the network element associated with said high watermark when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit.

75. (Original) The apparatus of claim 74 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and said determiner is further configured to ascertain whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit and to indicate one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

76. (Original) The apparatus of claim 75 wherein said reallocator further configured to:

allocate an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient;

allocate an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and

reallocate one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from a local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

77. (Original) The apparatus of claim 73 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and said determiner is further configured to ascertain whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit and to indicate one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

78. (Original) The apparatus of claim 75 wherein
said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and
said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

79. (Original) The apparatus of claim 78 wherein said network operates
according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).

80. (Original) The apparatus of claim 79 wherein
said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and
said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.

81. (Withdrawn) An apparatus capable of managing Internet Protocol (IP) addresses
on a data communications network, said apparatus comprising:
a memory for storing a global IP address pool; and
a global IP pool manager, comprising:
an allocator capable of allocating a plurality of local IP address pools, each of said
local IP address pools associated with a different network edge device
capable of accepting connection requests requiring an IP address;
a receiving interface capable of receiving a communication from said network
edge device, said communication including an IP address usage summary;
a determiner capable of determining whether one or more of said plurality
of local IP address pools should be reallocated based upon said IP address
usage data;

a reallocator capable of reallocating one or more of said plurality of local IP address pools based upon said an indication from said determiner; and an updater capable of updating one or more of said local IP address pool databases and said global IP pool database based upon said reallocating.

82. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 81 wherein:
said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and
said determiner is further configured to ascertain whether said high watermark of a local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit and to indicate one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to give more IP addresses to the network element associated with said high watermark when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit.

83. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 82 wherein
each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and
said determiner is further configured to ascertain whether said low watermark of a said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit and to indicate one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

84. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 83 wherein said reallocator is further configured to:

allocate an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient;

allocate an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and

reallocate one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from a local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

85. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 81 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and said determiner is further configured to ascertain whether said low watermark of said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit and to indicate one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

86. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 83 wherein

said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and
 said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

87. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 86 wherein said network operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).

88. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 84 wherein
 said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and
 said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.

89. (Withdrawn) An apparatus capable of managing Internet Protocol (IP) addresses on a data communications network, said apparatus comprising:
 a receiver capable of receiving a communication;
 an allocator capable of allocating an available IP address from a local IP address pool if said communication includes a connection request, said local IP address pool associated with a different network edge device capable of accepting connection requests;
 a determiner capable of determining whether said local IP address pool should be adjusted;
 an notifier capable of sending a alarm message to a global IP pool manager when said IP address pool should be adjusted; and
 a memory capable of storing an IP address allocation when said communication includes an IP address allocation.

90. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 89 wherein
said local IP address pool includes a high watermark that indicates the maximum
number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and
said determiner is further configured to ascertain whether said high watermark of
a local address pool exceeds a high watermark limit and to indicate one or
more IP address pools should be reallocated to give more IP addresses to
said network edge device when said high watermark exceeds said high
watermark limit.

91. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 90 wherein
each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates
the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device;
and
said determiner is further configured to ascertain whether said low watermark of
said address pool exceeds a low watermark limit and to indicate one or
more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from
said network edge device when said low watermark exceeds said low
watermark limit.

92. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 91 wherein said reallocator is further
configured to:

allocate an IP address from IP addresses reclaimed from other IP address pools when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is insufficient; allocate an IP addresses from unallocated IP addresses when said high watermark exceeds said high watermark limit and when the number of unallocated IP addresses is sufficient; and reallocate one or more IP address pools to reclaim IP addresses from said local IP address pool when said high watermark is less than said high watermark limit and said low watermark is greater than said low watermark limit.

93. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 89 wherein each said local IP address pool further comprises a low watermark that indicates the minimum number of IP addresses used by said network edge device; and said determiner is further configured to ascertain whether said low watermark of said local address pool exceeds a low watermark limit and to indicate one or more IP address pools should be reallocated to reclaim IP addresses from the network element associated with said low watermark when said low watermark exceeds said low watermark limit.

94. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 91 wherein said low watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses; and said high watermark is expressed as a percentage of allocated IP addresses.

95. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 94 wherein said network operates according to a simple network management protocol (SNMP).
96. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 95 wherein said low watermark is stored in an expression MIB; and said high watermark is stored in an expression MIB.